

Message Text

SECRET

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S E C R E T OSLO 0461

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
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SUBJ: ITALIAN SITUATION

REF STATE 015066

1. DISCUSSION OF THE ITALIAN SITUATION IN THE NORWEGIAN PRESS SO FAR HAS BEEN LOW-KEY, AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO STATEMENTS ON THE SUBJECT BY LEADING GON FIGURES. THE PROBLEMS POSED FOR NATO IN GENERAL WERE POINTED OUT IN A FRONT PAGE STORY IN OSLO'S LEADING DAILY, AFTENPOSTEN, ON JAN 25, WHICH INCLUDED AN INTERVIEW WITH SYG LUNS. THE STORY DID NOT MENTION ANY IMPLICATIONS FOR NORWAY OR NORWAY'S NATO CONNECTION HOWEVER.

2. THE CENTER OF INTEREST HERE IN THE FORTUNES OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY, AND IN THE EUROCOMMUNISM PHENOMENON IN GENERAL, IS NORWAY'S RULING LABOR PARTY. THE PARTY'S LEFTISH CHAIRMAN REIULF STEEN HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY VOCAL ON THE SUBJECT. IN INTERVIEWS IN THE PRESS AND ON TV IN THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS, AND IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH
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PAGE 02 OSLO 00461 270701Z

EMBOFFS, STEEN HAS ADDRESSED HIMSELF TO THE SITUATION OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI). FOR EXAMPLE, HE PERCEIVES NO PROBLEMS FOR NORWAY IF THE PCI WERE TO SHARE POWER IN A COALITION GOVERNMENT IN ITALY, THOUGH HE IS CAREFUL TO NOTE THAT HE IS NOT URGING SUCH A SOLUTION ON THE ITALIANS OR ON ANYONE ELSE IN EUROPE.

3. A DELEGATION FROM PCI WAS IN NORWAY IN NOVEMBER 1977 FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH LEADERS OF THE LABOR PARTY AND LO, THE TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION. THE PCI DELEGATION, AFTER ASSURING THE NORWEGIANS THAT THEY HAD ABANDONED CENTRAL ELEMENTS OF MARXIST DOGMA AND BECAME RECONCILED TO WORKING WITHIN THE DEMOCRATIC FRAMEWORK, BROACHED THE IDEA OF PCI COOPERATION WITH EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES, INCLUDING NORWAY'S LABOR PARTY, IN SEVERAL AREAS, SUCH AS THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC CRISIS AND EMPLOYMENT. THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE WAS SUGGESTED AS A POSSIBLE SETTING FOR SUCH POLITICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PARTIES. AFTER PCI'S MEETING WITH THE NORWEGIANS, PARTY CHAIRMAN STEEN STATED THAT IN VIEW OF PCI AND THE SPANISH COMMUNIST'S OPEN BREAK WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND THEIR RENUNCIATION OF LENINISM, HE FELT THAT IT WAS WORTHWHILE TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE SPANISH AND ITALIAN COMMUNISTS AND WESTERN EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS. STEEN WAS CAREFUL TO NOTE THAT ALL OF THIS WOULD BE CONTINGENT ON THE AGREEMENT OF THE ITALIAN AND SPANISH SOCIALIST PARTIES (PSI AND PSOE).

4. COMMENT: STEEN'S INFATUATION WITH EUROCOMMUNISM REPRESENTS AN EXTREME POSITION AMONG DEMOCRATIC POLITICIANS IN NORWAY, AND HIS EVERY OUTBURST ON THE SUBJECT IS MET WITH ANGUISHED SILENCE BY THE MAJORITY OF HIS OWN PARTY. THE OPPOSITION PARTIES OF THE RIGHT-OF-CENTER USE STEEN'S EURO-SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 OSLO 00461 270701Z

COMMUNISM STATEMENTS TO ATTACK THE LABOR PARTY AS RADICAL AND EXTREMIST. IN FACT, THOUGH STEEN IS OUTSPOKEN ON THE SUBJECT, HE IS APPARENTLY NOT TRYING TO LEAD NORWEGIAN OPINION TOWARD ACCEPTANCE OF COMMUNISTS IN WEST EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS. INSTEAD STEEN, WHO IS THE MOST ACTIVE NORWEGIAN IN THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, HAS BEEN WORKING HARD TO DEVELOP A CONSENSUS AMONG WEST EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS THAT TAKES NOTE OF THE CHANGES IN THE SPANISH AND ITALIAN PARTIES AND RECOGNIZES THE PARTIES' FITNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN GOVERNMENT IN THOSE TWO COUNTRIES. AT THE SAME TIME, STEEN STRONGLY OPPOSES COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT IN PORTUGAL AND FRANCE.

5. WE FEEL THE GON, AND ALL OF THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES, ARE FOR THE MOST PART APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENTS OF NATO MEMBER COUNTRIES. AT THE SAME TIME, MOST NORWEGIANS OF MODERATE POLITICAL STRIKE WOULD NOT LOOK KINDLY ON A US OR US-ALLIED STATEMENT ON COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT THAT COULD BE READ TO IMPLY INTERFERENCE IN ITALIAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS. SUCH A STATEMENT COULD BE EMBARRASSING POLITICALLY TO THE LEADERS OF THE MAJORITY

HERE WHO FORM THE STABLE BASE OF SUPPORT FOR THE NATO
ALLIANCE IN THIS COUNTRY. US STATEMENTS TO DATE
ON THE SUBJECT HOWEVER HAVE NOT CAUSED ANY PROBLEMS FOR
US HERE.
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